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ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes the demographic, sociolinguistic, and educational status of Basque in the whole of the Basque country: the Basque Autonomous Community (BAC), Navarre in Spain, and the Northern Basque Country in France. It also discusses English as a third language within the bilingual educational system in the BAC. In terms of demography, 22% of the population of the Basque country is bilingual and an additional 14.5% is "passive bilingual." Even though the percentage of all bilinguals (passive and otherwise) is 35% in the Northern Basque Country, the lack of institutional support for the Basque language is producing an important decline in its knowledge and use while in the BAC and Navarre the decline has already been stopped. The use of the Basque language in the BAC and Navarre has increased as it has come back into use in everyday life. The use of Basque is most influenced by the user's competence in the language and the use of Basque in the user's social networks and the sociolinguistic area where he or she resides. Basque as a medium of instruction has increased somewhat in the BAC and Navarre but is still very weak in the Northern Basque Country, across the border in France. These results confirm the crucial role played by institutional support in the revitalization and survival of lesser used languages. (Contains 19 references.) (KFT)

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Basque, Spanish, French and English in the Basque Country

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Abstract

This paper analyses the demographic, sociolinguistic and educational status of Basque in the whole of the Basque Country: the Basque Autonomous Community (BAC) and Navarre in Spain; and the Northern Basque Country in France. It also discusses the presence of English as a third language within the bilingual educational system in the BAC.

In terms of demography, 22% of the population in the Basque Country is bilingual and an additional 14.5% can be defined as passive bilingual. Even though the percentage of bilinguals and passive bilinguals is 35% in the Northern Basque Country, the lack of institutional support for the Basque language is producing and important decline in its knowledge and use while in the BAC and Navarre the decline has already been stopped.

The Basque language has increased its prestige and use in the BAC and some areas of Navarre but the most important challenge at the sociolinguistic level is to spread the use of Basque to all areas of everyday life. According to recent data the use of Basque is mainly influenced by the subject's competence in the language and the use of Basque in the subject's social networks and the sociolinguistic area where s/he lives. In general terms speakers present a positive attitude towards the promotion of the use of Basque.

The use of Basque as the medium of instruction has experimented a very important increase in the BAC and some areas of Navarre but the presence of Basque in education is still very weak in the Northern Basque Country.

Background

Basque (euskara) is a unique language in Western Europe for being non Indoeuropean. It is a highly inflected language with sixteen morphological cases and typologically, it has been defined as ergative and agglutinative (Saltarelli, 1988). The Basque language has been in contact with Latin and Romance languages for centuries and it has been influenced by them mainly at the phonological and lexical levels. The limited use of Basque at the institutional level,

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the insufficient number of written texts and the spread of the Basque Country North and South of the Pyrenees can explain the existence of six Basque dialects; three in the Northern Basque Country (Lapurtera, Nafarrera Beherea, Zuberera) and three South of the Pyrenees (Bizkaiera, Gipuzkera, Nafarrera). In the last decades, the Academy of the Basque Language (Euskaltzaindia) has played a crucial role in the standarization of the Basque language at the oral and written levels. Even though dialectal differences are present, 'unified Basque' (*euskara batua*) is the variety based on the central dialects of Basque which is widely accepted in the Basque Country. Nowadays, about 80% of the books published in Basque are published in 'Batua'. 'Batua' is also the variety used for education and official documents. There is an increasing number of grammars and dictionaries in Basque but the standarization of the Basque language is still an open process.

The Basque Country covers an area of approximately 20,742 square kilometres and comprises seven provinces, three belonging to the French 'Pyrenees Atlantiques' community (Lapurdi, Nafarroa Beherea and Zuberoa), and four to two autonomous regions in Spain (the Basque Autonomous Community, or BAC, and Navarre). Nowadays Basque is a minority language within its own territory and the disappearance of Basque from important areas of the Basque Country is a relatively recent phenomenon resulting from the intense contact with Romance languages and immigration. The contact with Romance languages explains the important retreat suffered by Basque in Araba and Navarre in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Hualde, Lakarra & Trask, 1995). This contact has increased in the twentieth century as the result of industrialization and the development of communications and the mass media. The industralization of the BAC and Navarre attracted an important number of Spanish speaking immigrants in the 50's, 60's and 70's. Furthermore, the 'Spanish only' policy during Franco's dictatorship (1939-1975) had important consequences not only at the institutional and educational levels but also in the private domain.

The political and social changes that have taken place in the last decades of the twentieth century in Spain have favoured attempts to maintain and revive the Basque language but the lack of institutional support for Basque in the Northern Basque Country is affecting its maintenance and revival North of the Pyrenees. The Spanish Constitution (1978) declared Spanish the nationwide official language and guaranteed the rights of Spanish speakers to use their language but also raised the possibility of recognizing other languages as co-official in their own territories. Nowadays, Basque has a co-official status in the BAC and the Northern area of Navarre but not in the Northern Basque Country. The differences in legislation have important implications for the resources allocated to the development of Basque and therefore for its maintenance and revival.

Apart from Basque and the Romance languages, English is becoming increasingly important for Basque citizens as a medium of intraEuropean and international communication. The status of English in the Basque Country is different from that of Basque because English is regarded as a foreign language and it is not used at the community level. This growing interest in learning English has resulted in demands for more English instruction in Basque schools that may implicate a change from bilingual to multilingual education in many Basque schools.

2. The demographic status of Basque

The total Basque population is approximately three million, 91% being Spanish citizens. The BAC is the most highly populated area with 73% of the total population, 18% live in Navarre and 9% in the Northern Basque Country. The studies conducted by the Basque Government, with the collaboration of the Government of Navarre and the Basque Cultural Institute of the Northern Basque Country (Euskararen Jarraipena II, 1997) indicate that 22% of the population is bilingual (Basque-Spanish or Basque-French), and 14.5% passive bilingual.

Monolinguals in Basque are only 0.5% of the population and monolinguals in either French or Spanish are 63% of the population. Therefore, with very few exceptions, speaking Basque equals being bilingual in Basque and a Romance language. In this chapter, speakers who are proficient in Basque will be referred to either as 'Bascophones' or 'bilinguals'.

The distribution of the Basque-speaking population varies considerably from region to region. In the BAC 24.7% of the population is bilingual and 16.3% passive bilingual; in the Northern Basque Country 25.7% is bilingual and 9.3% passive bilingual. In Navarre, only 9.4% of the population is bilingual and 9.8% passive bilingual. The proportion of people who are proficient in Basque has increased in the three BAC provinces and in 1991 there were 95,000 bilinguals more than in 1981, mainly because of the educational system (Garmendia, 1994). The percentage of Basque-speaking population is quite stable in Navarre but the lack of institutional support for Basque is favouring its decline in the Northern Basque Country.

Most Basque speakers are found in the provinces of Gipuzkoa, Nafarroa Beherea and Zuberoa, where the number of Bascophones is higher in rural and isolated areas. When towns and cities began to develop in the Southern Basque Country as the result of industrialization, Spanish speaking newcomers did not learn Basque and Spanish became the main language of communication. Nowadays, San Sebastian (Gipuzkoa) is the only capital city with more than 25% of Bascophones. The use of Basque in the BAC is more common in villages and towns of less than 10,000 inhabitans. In Spanish speaking areas (Araba, South of Navarre) the number of Bascophones, mainly speakers of Basque as a second language, is higher in bigger towns such as Vitoria-Gasteiz or Pamplona-Iruñea.

The percentages corresponding to the distribution of bilinguals (Basque and Spanish/French) and monolinguals (either Spanish or French) according to age groups are given in the following table.

Table 1

DISTRIBUTION OF BILINGUALS AND MONOLINGUALS IN DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS					
	16-24	**25-34**	**35-49**	**50-64**	**=65**
BAC					
Bilinguals	33	25	21	21	26
Passive biling.	37	27	11	6	5
Monolinguals	30	48	68	73	67
NAVARRE					
Bilinguals	11	9	9	9	9
Passive biling.	12	14	14	5	3
Monolinguals	77	77	77	86	87
NORTHERN					
Bilinguals	11	14	27	31	35
Passive biling.	13	13	9	9	6
Monolinguals	75	73	64	60	56

The data indicate that there are important differences when the three territories are compared. The percentage of Spanish-speaking monolinguals in the BAC is much lower in the younger generations and the same trend is observed in Navarre even though the differences between the age groups are not as important. The data reveal that there is an increasing number of French-speaking monolinguals among the younger generations in the Northern Basque Country and that threatens the future of Basque in this area where Basque is not recognized as an official language.

3. The sociolinguistic status of Basque

The demographic status of Basque in the BAC (and to a lesser extent in Navarre) reflects an increase in the number of Bascophones. The use of Basque and its limitations have recently been analyzed in the General Plan for the Revitalization of Basque (Eukara Biziberritzeko Plan

Nagusia or EBPN, 1999; see also Cenoz & Perales, 1997). This revitalization is mainly reflected in the educational system as we will see in the next section. Other areas identified in the EBPN are adult education, family life, sports and leisure activities, the media, publications, advertising, work and religion. Nevertheless, the use of Basque in these areas is not widespread and faces serious limitations. It is common for schoolchildren instructed through the medium of Basque to use Spanish with their friends or for adults to drop their Basque courses before becoming proficient in the language. Even though there is a Basque-medium television channel, Basque radios and a Basque newspaper, the presence of Basque cannot compete with that of other languages in the media or in advertising. The number of publications in Basque has increased in the last decades but many of these publications are textbooks. Within the family, Bascophone parents usually speak Basque to their children in the BAC and Navarre but not so often in the Northern Basque Country. The presence of Basque in sport and leisure activities is also weaker than in education. Another problem identified in the EBPN is the quality of the Basque language and the important influence it receives from Spanish.

Bascophones tend to use Basque in the private domain but they frequently use Spanish in more formal settings (Euskararen Jarraipena I, 1995). Bascophones also use Basque more often with children than with other members of the family and they tend to use Basque less often when shopping or working. Most bilinguals (77%) listen to the radio in Basque and 82% of them watch television in Basque.

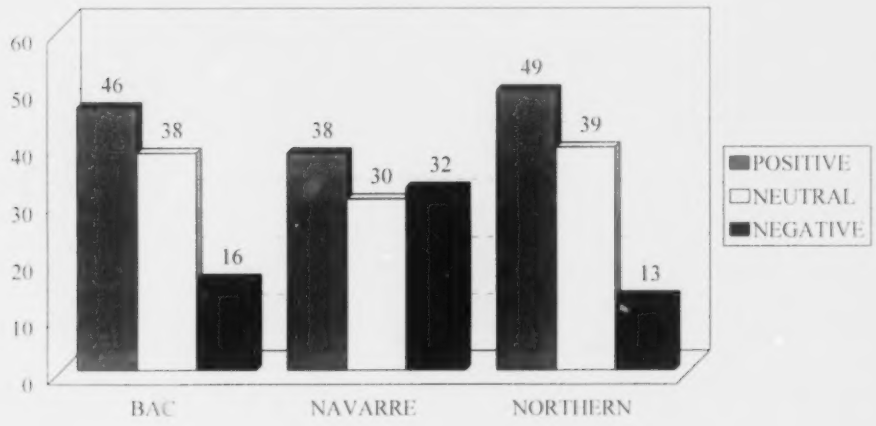
According to the two sociolinguistic surveys already mentioned, there are three main factors affecting the use of Basque (Euskararen Jarraipena I, 1995; Euskararen Jarraipena II, 1997). The first is the number of Bascophones in the subject's social networks. As, with a few exceptions, speaking Basque equals being bilingual, it is necessary for everybody or almost everybody in the subject's social networks to know and use Basque if this language is going to be used for communication. The second factor affecting the use of Basque is also related to

linguistic proficiency and it is the relative ease that the subject has to use Basque and Spanish. Sixty five per cent of the bilinguals find it easier or at least not more difficult to speak Basque than Spanish but 35% of the bilinguals find it easier to speak Spanish, which in most cases is their first language. The third factor affecting the use of Basque is the number of Bascophones in the sociolinguistic area where the subject lives.

Attitudes towards the revitalization of Basque are also indicators of the sociolinguistic status of the language. In Euskararen Jarraipena II (1997), 6,359 subjects were asked if the use of Basque should be promoted. The percentages corresponding to positive, neutral and negative attitudes are given in figure 1.

ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE PROMOTION OF THE USE OF BASQUE

Figure 1



The data indicate that most subjects present a positive attitude towards the promotion of the use of Basque and in the BAC and in the Northern Basque Country the percentage of subjects against this promotion is much lower than in Navarre.

In sum, the Basque language has increased its use and prestige in the BAC and in the Northern and mixed areas of Navarre but not in the Northern Basque Country. The weak demographic basis of the Basque language is to some extent counterbalanced by the institutional support it receives in the BAC and in some areas of Navarre. This support has been crucial to stop its decline but there are important challenges for the future regarding the use of the language.

Bilingual Education in the Basque Country

Even though Basque was banned from education during the Franco regime (1939-1975), a number of private Basque-medium schools (or 'ikastolak') were opened in the 1960s. These schools were not officially recognized in the beginning, but as the number of students increased they had to be eventually accepted. With the new political situation, in 1979, Basque, along with Spanish, was recognized as an official language in the BAC by the Statute of Autonomy. The law on the Normalization of the Basque Language (1982) made Basque and Spanish compulsory subjects in all schools in the BAC. Three models of language schooling were established: models A, B and D (there is no letter 'C' in Basque). These models differ with respect to the language or languages of instruction used, their linguistic aims, and their intended student population.

> **Model A** schools are intended for native speakers of Spanish who choose to be instructed in Spanish. Basque is taught as a second language for 3 to 5 hours a week. These schools provide minimal instruction and, thus, minimal proficiency in Basque as a second language.

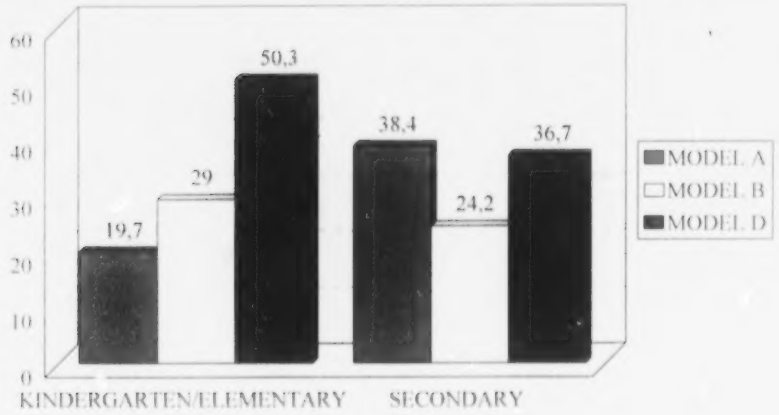
Model B schools are intended for native speakers of Spanish who want to be bilingual in Basque and Spanish. Both Basque and Spanish are used as languages of instruction for approximately 50% of school time, although there is considerable variation from school to school (Arzamendi & Genesee, 1997).

In **Model D** schools, Basque is the language of instruction and Spanish is taught as a subject for 3 to 5 hours a week. This model was originally created as a language maintenance program for native speakers of Basque, but currently also includes a large number of students with Spanish as their first language. Consequently, Model D schools can be regarded as both total immersion programs for native Spanish-speaking students and first language maintenance programs for native Basque speakers.

Parents can choose the model they want for their children, and each model is available in the public and private sectors. Access to all three options is limited in some areas of the country, where there are not enough students interested in a particular model.

When the bilingual models were established, approximately 25% of the students in the BAC attended Basque-medium schools; at present, 79% of elementary schoolchildren and 61% of secondary schoolchildren have Basque as a language of instruction. The percentages corresponding to enrolment in the three models in elementary and secondary school in the BAC in the year 1999-2000 are given in figure 2.

Figure 2



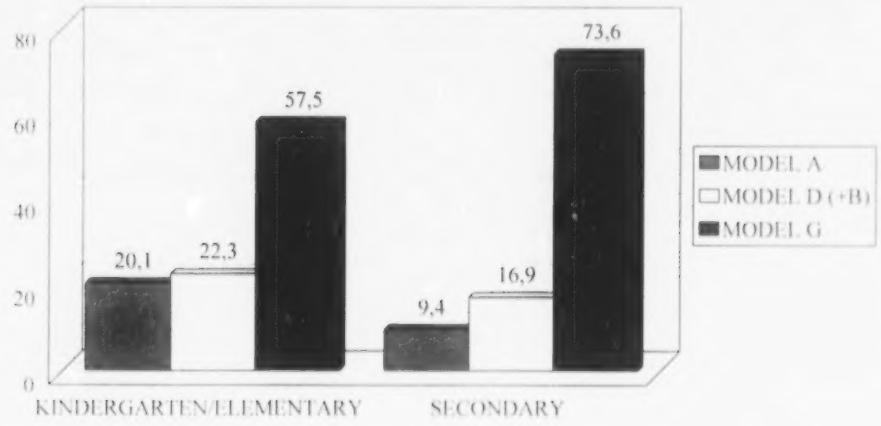
The data indicate that most kindergarten/elementary and secondary schoolchildren have Basque as the language of instruction for some or all the subjects both in elementary and secondary school. The data also indicate that there are more children in model D in kindergarten and elementary school than in secondary school, and that means that the percentage corresponding to model D in secondary school will increase at the expense of model A in the near future.

According to the Foral Law of the Basque language (1986) three linguistic areas are distinguished in Navarre: the Bascophone area in the North, the non-Bascophone area in the South and the mixed area which includes the central area of Navarre and its capital city. The Foral Decree 159/1988 (1988) establishes that Basque is only compulsory in the Bascophone area where we can find the three educational models of the BAC (A, B and D) but model B is only chosen by 3% of elementary schoolchildren and 0,1% of secondary schoolchildren. In the mixed and non-Bascophone areas of Navarre there is also a model G with no Basque at all. In the mixed area there are three models: A with Basque as a subject, D with Basque as the language of instruction and Spanish as a subject and G with no Basque at all. The D model is not

offered by the public school system in the non-Bascophone area and there are only a few private Basque-medium schools. The majority of the population lives in the mixed area of Navarre and the Bascophone area is the less populated. The percentages corresponding to the total distribution of the models in elementary and secondary schools in Navarre in the year 1998-99 are given in figure 3.

BILINGUAL EDUCATION IN NAVARRE

Figure 3



The data indicate that Model G is the most popular even though there is an important increase of models A and D in kindergarten and primary school as compared to secondary school. This increase means that the percentages correponding to models A and D will increase in secondary school in the future.

In sum, nowadays instruction through the medium of Basque (models B and D) is increasing both in the BAC and Navarre but there are important differences between these two regions, the presence of Basque in education being more important in the BAC. Within the two regions there are important differences in the distribution of the models according to the sociolinguistic context.

The situation of Basque in education in the Northern Basque Country is weaker than in Navarre or the BAC. The first Basque school ('ikastola') was open in 1969 and Basque was introduced into the public educational system in 1983. Nowadays, there are four models which are similar (though not identical) to the A, B, D and G models in Navarre. However, only a small proportion of the population has access to the models in which Basque is a subject or the medium of instruction (Jauréguiberry, 1993). The distribution of the percentages corresponding to the models in kindergarten and primary school is the following: 7% of the schoolchildren are in model A, 15% in model D or B and 78% in the 'French only' model G. These percentages are similar to those of Navarre but in the Bascophone area of Navarre 80% of kindergarten and primary schoolchildren have Basque as the language of instruction.

Several evaluations of the Basque bilingual programs have been carried out in the last years and more than 25.000 students have taken part in these evaluations. The evaluations have focused on several areas: proficiency in Basque and Spanish, academic development and foreign language (see also Cenoz, 1998, Etxeberria, 1999). The results indicate that instruction through Basque (the minority language) is closely related to higher levels of achievement in this language while proficiency in Spanish/French (the majority languages) tends to be unrelated to the language of instruction. It seems likely that since Spanish and French are the majority languages, opportunities for extensive exposure to it outside school compensate for reduced exposure to it in school. Most studies have also found that there are no differences in academic development.

Bilingual Education and English

Apart from Basque and the Romance languages, the spread of English as a language of international and intra-European communication has also affected education in the Basque

Country. As in many European bilingual communities learning English means learning a third language and it is a process that shares some characteristics with second language acquisition but it is also affected by the outcomes of bilingualism (see also Cenoz & Jessner, 2000).

The increasing need to be proficient in English and the traditional low level of proficiency attained at school in the BAC and Navarre have resulted in different projects to introduce English in kindergarten or to intensify the exposure to English at a later age. A research study on the early introduction of English in kindergarten shows that learning English from age four does not adversely affect the students' acquisition of Basque or Spanish or their overall cognitive development (Cenoz, 1997). Research findings on the acquisition of English as a third language in the BAC also indicate that higher levels of bilingualism (model D) are positively related with higher levels of proficiency in English (Cenoz & Valencia, 1994; Lasagabaster, 1997). These results are compatible with the threshold and interdependence hypotheses proposed by Cummins (1976, 1981), the higher levels of metalinguistic awareness associated with bilingualism and more highly developed learning strategies associated with L3 acquisition (Cenoz & Genesee, 1998). Nevertheless, bilingual and multilingual education are complex educational systems and it is important to conduct further research in order to identify the most efficient formulae of exposure to the three (or in some cases four) languages in different sociolinguistic contexts.

In general terms, parents, teachers and schoolchildren present a very positive attitude towards the early introduction of English (Cenoz, 1997) but a recent study shows that D model students' attitudes towards Basque are slightly more positive than towards Spanish and English (Cenoz, 1999).

The intensity of the exposure to English and the possibility of using English as the medium of instruction for some school subjects faces some problems. Even though there are special educational programs for teachers, the number of teachers highly proficient both in

Basque and English is still insufficient. Moreover, the different status of Basque and English at the international level also has some implications. There is concern that the gains that Basque has achieved in education after long years of effort will be threatened by the extended use of English while others think that more resources should be spent on English than on Basque.

Conclusion

The situation of Basque is different in the Northern and Southern parts of the Basque Country. Basque has stopped its decline in the BAC and Navarre but not in the Northern Basque Country. These differences confirm the crucial role played by institutional support in the revitalization of lesser used languages. Even though the data in the BAC and Northern and mixed areas of Navarre are optimistic, the future of Basque is still uncertain and a very carefully planned lingusitic policy involving the community languages and languages of intraEuropean communication is needed.

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